THE NEW INDIAN EXPRESS

BENGALURU • WEDNESDAY • DECEMBER 10, 2025 • ₹9.00 • PAGES 22 • LATE CITY EDITION

READ SHARE FOLLOW
newindianexpress.com
facebook.com/thenewindianxpress twitter.com/newindianxpress
instagram.com/newindianexpress

AUSTRALIA BANS UNDER-16S FROM SOCIAL MEDIA IN NOVEL CRACKDOWN

A raft of the world's most popular apps and websites face US$33 million in fines if they fail to purge Australia-based users younger than 16

ONUS ON INTERNET FIRMS TO CHECK USER AGE

The Australian government said unprecedented measures are needed to protect children from "predatory algorithms" filling phone screens with bullying, sex and violence. The laws came into effect on Wednesday across Australia. Social media companies bear the sole responsibility for checking users are 16 or older, with some saying they'll use AI to detect a user's age

NEW ZEALAND, MALAYSIA MAY FOLLOW SUIT

- YouTube has attacked the laws as "rushed" and said they would only push children into deeper, darker corners of the internet
- Australia's efforts will be closely watched by all those worried about the dangers of social media. Already, New Zealand and Malaysia are mulling similar restrictions on teenagers as per news reports | P14

3.5 lakh

USERS BETWEEN AGE OF 13 AND 15 IN AUSTRALIA, SAYS INSTAGRAM

CHENNAI ▪ MADURAI ▪ VIJAYAWADA ▪ BENGALURU ▪ KOCHI ▪ HYDERABAD ▪ VISAKHAPATNAM ▪ COIMBATORE ▪ KOZHIKODE ▪ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM ▪ BELAGAVI ▪ BHUBANESWAR ▪ SHIVAMOGGA ▪ MANGALURU ▪ TIRUPATI ▪ TIRUCHY ▪ TIRUNELVELI ▪ SAMBALPUR ▪ HUBBALLI ▪ DHARMAPURI ▪ KOTTAYAM ▪ KANNUR ▪ VILLUPURAM ▪ KOLLAM ▪ TADEPALLIGUDEM ▪ NAGAPATTINAM ▪ THRISSUR ▪ KALABURAGI

Vote theft anti-national act, says Rahul

Alleges ECI undermining electoral process; says law can be changed to hold poll panel accountable

The biggest anti-national act you can do is vote 'chori'. Because when you destroy the vote, you destroy the fabric of this country

— Rahul Gandhi, LoP in Lok Sabha

PREETHA NAIR @ New Delhi

LEADER of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi on Tuesday launched a sharp attack against the ruling party accusing it of committing the "biggest anti-national act" by orchestrating 'vote theft' in collusion with the Election Commission and undermining the idea of India.

Participating in a discussion on election reforms, Gandhi also outlined a slew of electoral reforms to safeguard the integrity of the electoral process. Making suggestions, he called for providing machine-readable voter lists to all parties one month before elections, taking back the law that allows destruction of CCTV footage after 45 days, giving access to EVMs, and changing the law that allows the election commissioners "to get away with whatever they want to do".

In his 30-minute speech, he posed three questions which he claimed show the BJP is "directing and using" EC to damage India's democracy.

"The biggest anti-national act you can do is vote *chori* (theft). Because when you destroy the vote, you destroy the fabric of this country, you destroy modern India, you destroy the idea of India. Those across the aisle are doing an anti-national act," Gandhi said, gesturing towards the treasury benches.

He cautioned the election commissioners that law can be changed retroactively to hold them accountable. "Let me remind them: don't worry, we are going to change the law, and that too retroactively. And we are going to come and find you," he said.

Demanding an answer from Union Home Minister Amit Shah, the Congress leader asked why the Chief Justice of India was removed from the selection panel for appointing the Chief Election Commissioner and Election Commissioners. Why are the prime minister and home minister so keen on choosing who the election commissioner is going to be, he asked.

Lashing out at the government for altering the law with regard to CCTV footage to enable vote theft, the former Congress chief said, "Why was a law put in place that allows the EC to destroy CCTV footage 45 days after the election? It is not a question of data. It is a question of stealing the election."

'Oppn just looking for excuses'

Union Law Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal said SIR has been held in the past as well but the Opposition blames it for their defeats and refuses to introspect | P11

SC asks ECI to flag intimidation of BLOs during SIR exercise

5 spl SIR observers for Bengal

The joint secretaries of the ministries of Defence, MHA, I&B, Dept of Economic Affairs, and Dept of Rural Development will arrive in West Bengal on Thursday to oversee SIR work. They have been appointed by EC as special roll observers

SUCHITRA KALYAN MOHANTY @ New Delhi

EXPRESSING concern over reports of Booth Level Officers (BLO) being threatened in West Bengal and other states, the Supreme Court on Tuesday directed the Election Commission of India to take action to protect BLOs.

While issuing directions on the security of ground-level electoral staff, a bench of Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi also warned states against non-cooperation in the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls.

"Bring to our notice instances of lack of cooperation, hindrances to work of BLOs and we will pass appropriate orders," the bench told senior advocate Rakesh Dwivedi, appearing for the Election Commission. "Deal with the situation or it will cause anarchy," CJI Kant told Dwivedi.

The bench said the directions regarding the protection and management of BLOs will apply on a pan-India basis.

The directions came during the hearing of a batch of pleas by various states including West Bengal, Kerala, Assam and others over challenges faced during teh voter roll revision.

INDIA bloc leaders led by DMK's Kanimozhi & Priyanka Gandhi of Congress submit the notice to Om Birla, LS Speaker | x

107 MPs submit notice to impeach Madras HC judge

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ New Delhi/Chennai

AS many as 107 INDIA bloc MPs, led by DMK, submitted a notice to Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla on Tuesday, seeking impeachment of Madras High Court judge G R Swaminathan for his order of December 1 and 3 directing Subramaniya Swamy temple authorities at Thirupparankundram to allow lighting lamps on a pillar (deepathoon) near a dargah on the hill.

The impeachment notice accused Justice G R Swaminathan — of the Madurai bench of Madras HC — of conduct that "raises serious questions regarding impartiality, transparency, and the secular functioning of the judiciary." It alleged "undue favouritism" towards senior advocate M Sricharan Ranganathan and lawyers from a "particular community," besides deciding cases on "particular political ideology" against the constitutional principle of secularism. Copies of the notice were also sent to President Droupadi Murmu and CJI Sanjiv Khanna.

Orders and actions of Justice G R Swaminathan is disruptive to social harmony

Kanimozhi, DMK MP

The delegation included Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, Akhilesh Yadav, T R Baalu, Kanimozhi, Supriya Sule and others. On December 3, Justice Swaminathan had allowed a group of petitioners to light the lamp on the pillar near the dargah, and directed CISF protection to them. Police stopped the group from lighting the lamp, leading to a furore, prompting the Tamil Nadu government to move the Supreme Court, which admitted TN's plea. P7

K'taka HC stays menstrual leave order, recalls it within hours

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

THE Karnataka High Court on Tuesday recalled its interim order staying a notification of the state government granting a day of menstrual leave in a month for women aged between 18 and 52.

Justice Jyoti M passed the interim order at 10.45 am after hearing the two petitions filed by the Bangalore Hotels' Association and Avirata AFL Connectivity Systems Ltd, Bengaluru. But she recalled the order around 1.30 pm after Advocate-General K Shashikiran Shetty requested to consider the arguments of the state before staying the notification. The matter was adjourned till Wednesday for a hearing.

The petitioners stated that depending on the nature of work or process, industrial establishments are required to be registered under various Acts. These statutes primarily regulate health, welfare and overall working conditions of employees, including hours of work, weekly holidays, leave with wages, etc. There is a comprehensive statutory framework that mandates employers to provide sufficient leave to the employees.

But the government's November 20 notification is not supported by any legislative enactment. There is no specific provision in those statutes mandating employers to provide menstrual leave to female employees, and as such, the government is not empowered to direct industrial establishments to provide menstrual leave by way of an executive order, the petitioners claimed. P7

₹5,475 CR LOST

State clocked 57,733 cyber cases in 3 yrs

PRAMODKUMAR VAIDYA @ Belagavi

ACCORDING to a shocking statistic revealed in the Legislative Assembly on Tuesday, the state witnessed 57,733 cybercrimes in the last three years with people losing a whopping Rs 5,475 crore.

The police, however, managed to detect only 10,717 cases and recover only Rs 627 crore. But the number of such cases being reported has come down because of initiatives taken by the government this year.

Tabling detailed data on cybercrimes while replying to a query by MLA Cement Manju, Home Minister G Parameshwara said changes have been brought to the Police Act to empower the police to curb and detect such crimes. Despite steps taken by the government, persons involved in such crimes have been duping innocent people using advanced technology, he added.

The number of cybercrimes reported in 2023 was 22,255 and money swindled was Rs 873.29 crore. The police detected 6,159 cases and managed to recover Rs 177 crore.

This year though the number of cases has come down, the money stolen has risen to Rs 2,039 crore. In all, 1,009 cases have been detected and Rs 127 crore recovered.

Parameshwara said the dip in number is because of several initiatives taken by the Home Department, including setting up of 43 CyberCrime, Economic Offences and Narcotics (CEN) police stations across the state. CONTINUED ON: P4

Prime Minister Narendra Modi with Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella in New Delhi | PTI

To support India's ambitions, Microsoft is committing $17.5 billion to help build the infrastructure, skills, and sovereign capabilities needed for India's AI first future — Satya Nadella, CEO, Microsoft

MICROSOFT TO INVEST $17.5 BN IN INDIA OVER 4 YRS

RAKESH KUMAR @ New Delhi

US tech giant Microsoft has announced $17.5 billion (₹1.58 lakh crore) investment in India over the next four years to help build the infrastructure, skills, and capabilities needed for the country's AI future. The firm's CEO Satya Nadella, who met Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday, called it "the largest investment ever in Asia". Modi and Nadella discussed India's AI roadmap and growth priorities, Microsoft said.

The US firm's investment in India focuses on three pillars—scale, skills, and sovereignty—aligned with the Prime Minister's vision of building a comprehensive ecosystem that drives AI innovation and access at a national scale.

Puneet Chandok, president of Microsoft India and South Asia, said the new investment will be used to continue scaling the company's cloud and AI infrastructure, skilling initiatives, and ongoing operations across India.

How Air India managed to escape crisis

S LALITHA @ New Delhi

PLANNING in advance helped Tata-owned Air India Group to ensure that both Air India and Air India Express sailed through smoothly after DGCA's revised crew roster came into effect from November 1.

This is in stark contrast to the shoddy management by IndiGo, which resulted in 1,232 cancellations last month that cascaded into a full-blown crisis from December 1.

Back in October, when the Union civil aviation ministry finalised the winter schedule (October 26, 2025 to March 28, 2026) for all domestic airlines, IndiGo was permitted to operate 15,014 departures per week, the maximum permitted for any airline. Air India and Air India Express were allotted 4,277 and 3,171 flights, respectively, per week.

Sources in Air India said the the new Flight Duty Time Limitations (FDTL) were a huge challenge as literally everything had to be changed. Also, Air India was trying to rebuild its image after the Ahmedabad disaster. Air India began recruitment of Captains and Flying Officers quite early, said a source. "We went all out to recruit pilots ...we understood the new roster would require a massive increase in operational crew," sources said.

IndiGo on Monday told DGCA that a software glitch was also a contributory reason for the crisis. Air India had figured this two months ago.

"When it was made known clearly to all of us that the new rules will fully come into effect by November 1, we began work on it by October. The software involved in it is a very complicated one. It took us two months to ready it," an AI source said. P15

IndiGo will face action for mass disruption of flights triggered by crew rostering failures

Ram Mohan Naidu, Minister

Swamala Rojana
Sehat Ka Khajana!
Chyavanprash Fortified with GOLD
SWAMALA®
Classic
▸ Maintains health
▸ Supports healthy immune function
▸ Replenishes body tissues
▸ Improves physical & mental wellbeing
▸ Overcomes debility
Also available
NO ADDED SUGAR
Brahmi | Mushali | Keshar | Mouktik
Follow us on: sdiconsumerayurved www.sdiindia.com
Shree Baidyanath Ayurved Limited | Authentic, Standardised, Safe Ayurved Medicines Health & Trade Enquiries: 1800 22 9874

BIG NAMES ON LIST

FOR IPL MINI-AUCTION ON DEC 16

A total of 350 cricketers — 240 Indians and 110 overseas players — will go under the hammer in Abu Dhabi. Quinton de Kock, Steve Smith among stars to vie for 77 slots. KKR have the biggest purse | P17

EXPRESS READ

Ruthless India thrash South Africa by 101 runs

Bhubaneswar: India thrashed South Africa by 101 runs as the visitors collapsed for a meagre 74 in the T20I in Cuttack on Tuesday. India had posted 175/6 thanks to a rescue act by Hardik Pandya | P17

Belgium's top court clears way for Choksi's extradition

NEW DELHI: Belgium's Supreme Court on Tuesday dismissed Indian fugitive Mehul Choksi's plea challenging his extradition to India in a ₹13,850 crore PNB scam. On October 17, a court in Antwerp had said India's extradition request is valid | P11